

Aaron Daniels File

FADED FOOTPRINTS THE LOST RHOADS MINES



AND OTHER HIDDEN TREASURES
IN THE MOUNTAINS

FADED FOOTPRINTS THE LOST RHOADS MINES GEORGE

*For Aaron Daniels
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CHAPTER 2

PICK AND SHOVEL PIONEERS

The Treasures of Valle Redondo

Beyond Timpanogos Valley and the Rio San Antonio de Padua Canyon, the Old Spanish Trail entered a high mountain valley nearly round in shape, hence its name, Valle Redondo, Round Valley. Like a giant compass, four trails came together from its four cardinal points. Using modern place names, the trail from Utah Valley came from the south, a second led eastward to Daniels Canyon and the Ute Indian Reservation, another went north over Lake Creek Summit to the West and North forks of the Duchesne River, while the fourth turned west to Kamas Valley and the Provo and Weber river canyons. Heber (Round) Valley was a favorite camping place for Ute Indians long before the coming of either the Spanish-Mexican miners or the Mormon settlers. Two traders who yearly made their way north from Santa Fe to trade with the Utes were Mauracio Arze and Lagos Garcia, even though they traded without benefit of a license. In 1813 both were arrested for illegal trade with the Utes. Their names are still preserved in the shelter of an overhanging cliff along the Old Spanish Trail.

Just beyond where that well-traveled trail entered Heber Valley from the south, it crossed a small stream later called Daniels Creek, named for Aaron Daniels, one of the first settlers in the valley. Remember that name, for Daniels was among the West's first treasure hunters. But more important, he left a journal which has become a Bible for modern-day gold seekers. Daniels Canyon, the dark recess from which that small creek came, was also named for him. One entry in his journal reads as follows:

In 1858, I took a herd of cattle to Heber Valley and started a ranch on the Provo River, about one mile north of where Daniels Creek enters that river. I trapped and explored the valley during the winter, and in the spring I discovered a Spanish mine near the summit of the ridge of Daniels Canyon.

Daniels didn't elaborate on the exact location of the mine he found; but note that he said it was located near the summit of "the ridge of Daniels Canyon," not the summit of some ridge in Daniels Canyon as many have long thought. The summit ridge he referred to is much higher in elevation than are any of the ridges within the canyon. Apparently he didn't stake any claim to the mine, so when he moved to the village of Wanship a short time later, it was soon forgotten and became a lost Spanish mine again. Also, note that the mine, old even when Daniels discovered it, could not have been dug by anyone other than Spanish miners, since there had been no other Europeans in those mountains before Daniels, except perhaps a few Mountain Men, none of whom were noted for digging in mines.

A tale which used to be told by old men around Heber Valley claimed that the Daniels mine was located in the seventh canyon which branches off from Daniels Canyon. If that tale is true, then the mine might be found somewhere in Thornton Hollow, which is the seventh canyon, located seven miles up Daniels Canyon. It might be worth investigating, for other Spanish mines have been found in that same area. In 1896, Bill Bethers discovered a strange stone not far from the mouth of Daniels Canyon; the rock was covered with "hieroglyphic" characters. Bethers took a man "accustomed to deciphering such signs" to interpret its puzzling inscription. Figures cut into the stone showed a man with his hands thrown up, as if he had suddenly been startled, a burro or similar pack animal, and a half moon. The signs were interpreted to be a guide for miners returning to the mountains after a long absence. With Henry Boren as a partner, Bethers began searching the canyon for some sign of a mine, and on a high ridge not far from the mouth of the canyon he found three tunnels close together, but driven into the mountain at different angles.



Mauracio Arze packed gold from the northern mountains 200 years ago.

The discovery caused such great excitement at Heber Valley that on February 12, 1897 the editor of the *Wasatch Wave* published an account of the find:

All early settlers of this valley have heard that some eight or ten years before the first people arrived here (about 1849), there existed valuable mines in the surrounding mountains which were worked by Mexicans. Those miners would return to their homes each fall, taking a long pack train of burros heavily laden with golden riches, which they had dug from mines which all of the first settlers said were located above this valley. One old Mexican said the mines were about thirty miles from a large lake (Utah Lake), and could be found by following up a stream which flowed from the first canyon which entered this valley (Daniels Canyon). He told how miners had been driven from their mines by Indians. Many miners were killed, only a few escaping to tell the tale of a treasure left hidden in those mines. Now comes the claim that those mines have been found by Messrs. Bethers and Boren.

The report published in the *Wave* also included an account of a reporter who accompanied Bethers and Boren to the mine to personally determine the authenticity of their find. His inspection was reported as follows:

The writer took a long and tedious march up a ridge at what seemed to be an angle of forty-five degrees. After about an hour and a half we came to where a tunnel had been driven into solid rock. It followed a vein of ore from the surface, which vein is reported to return very good assays in gold. Cleaning out the debris in the old workings has

left a hole through solid rock some three feet wide and five feet high, so far as the tunnel has been explored. Northwest from this prospect is another tunnel which has only recently been discovered, and there is still another about seventy-five yards to the southeast. All of the tunnels have been completely filled in with loose dirt and rock. The work of cleaning them out plainly reveals that the implements of man were used by the original miners.

Remember, those were old mines discovered by the earliest pioneers. They were not, as some now claim, dug by those pioneers. The mark of iron tools found in the tunnels as well as the fact that they had been purposely filled in with waste rock in order to conceal them identified those old mines as being of Spanish origin, while the "hieroglyphic" rock confirmed that belief. The *Wave* reporter also saw and described the inscribed stone which first led Bethers to the old mine:

A large granite rock which stands perpendicular to the ground about a half-mile down the slope from the mine is covered with peculiar looking hieroglyphics. The rock is of a wedge shape, about a foot thick on one side and tapering to about two inches on the other. It stands about five feet high and is about four feet wide. There are a number of characters on the rock, which though perfectly visible, I was unable to decipher. Whether Messrs. Bethers and Boren have found the lost mine described on the rock is a matter which will yet unravel, but that they have found tunnels made by human hands is a positive certainty. We hope they will open up a bonanza!

Bethers and Boren opened one of the tunnels for 75 feet before they came to a place too badly caved and dangerous to proceed further. Starting anew, they opened the adjoining tunnel for 25 feet before winter snow drove them from the mountains. Both men intended to return in the spring, but Bethers moved away from Heber Valley while Boren was called on a church mission to settle new townsites in the southern part of the territory. Apparently no one else in those distant days had the time or interest to continue digging at the old mine, so once more it was abandoned. Over the years since, several men have staked their claim to the tunnels, but none have reopened the caved diggings beyond where Bethers and Boren quit work. Only a few people today know the exact location of all three tunnels, and none of them seem interested in digging for Spanish gold.

Near the top of Daniels Canyon there may be a lost ledge of gold. Joe Bingley operated a gravel pit close to the mouth of the canyon, but some say that he spent more time prospecting than he did selling gravel. Bingley confided to his close friend and banker, Gordon Taylor of Kamas, that he found a place near the head of the canyon where sometime long ago Spanish miners dug gold from an ore vein which ran across an exposed rock ledge. Bingley discovered where those miners of

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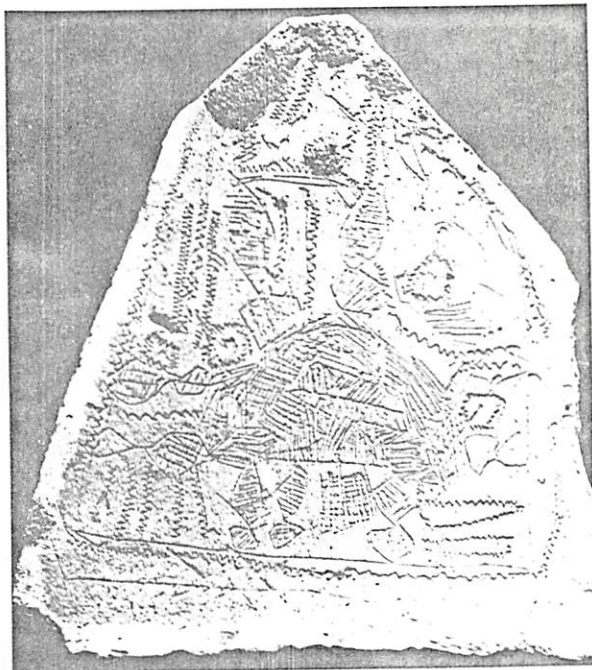
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old had built fires against the ledge to heat it, and then threw water on the hot rock to crack and break it loose from the ledge. Bingley was still dickering for a loan from his banker friend so he could start work on his find when an even more promising discovery made him forget all about Daniels Canyon.

Bingley hired Bill Nunley, described by some who knew him as an old reprobate, to help him survey a stand of timber atop Soapstone Mountain. Somewhere on the mountain, while the men were separated, Nunley fell into an old mine shaft which had been timbered over in days long gone by in order to conceal it. When his eyes became accustomed to the dim light at the bottom of the shaft, Nunley found himself sitting on a pile of white quartz rock, heavily-laced with what he was certain were stringers of yellow gold. The pit was not deep, so the old fellow was able to pull himself up through the rotted timbers. He threw some pine boughs over the hole and started off to find Bingley, but by the time he caught up with his employer, Nunley had pretty well decided not to tell him about his unexpected windfall.

Upon their return to Heber City, Nunley lost no time hurrying to Tink Clyde's thirst emporium, where after a few drinks he began showing a chunk of gold ore from the shaft to anyone who would buy him a drink. It wasn't long until Bingley heard of Nunley's good fortune, and he hastened down to the tavern, demanding to see the ore specimen. The following morning, with the still half-tipsy Nunley in tow, Bingley returned to Soapstone Mountain, where until they ran out of supplies he and Nunley searched for the old mine shaft, but alas, in vain. Nunley's booze-soaked brain couldn't recall which trail he had taken through the thick pine forest, nor did the fact that he had covered the hole with pine branches make finding it any easier. More trips to the mountain followed until summer turned to winter, but the site of Nunley's fall from grace couldn't be found again. Somewhere along the way, Bingley forgot all about the ledge he found in Daniels Canyon. Both men are now long since gone to wherever old prospectors go, but one day a shepherd, or perhaps a deer hunter, will make a mis-step and fall into the old shaft atop Soapstone Mountain. Stranger things have happened.

Bingley's Spanish ledge discovery in Daniels Canyon may have been part of the same gold ore vein found by William Foreman in 1891. In his journal, Foreman told of a find he made in May of that year; but he wrote that it was located on the Indian Reserve, where white men were not allowed to mine. Apparently Foreman worked his find in secret despite it being on Indian land, for a July entry in his journal states: "Commenced to run a tunnel, no timber needed." Two years later, in August 1893, another entry states: "I camped all winter while working in the mine. I am in 250 feet now." Nothing further appears in his journal about his mine, but no prudent man would dig a tunnel for 250 feet through solid rock where "no timber is needed" without some

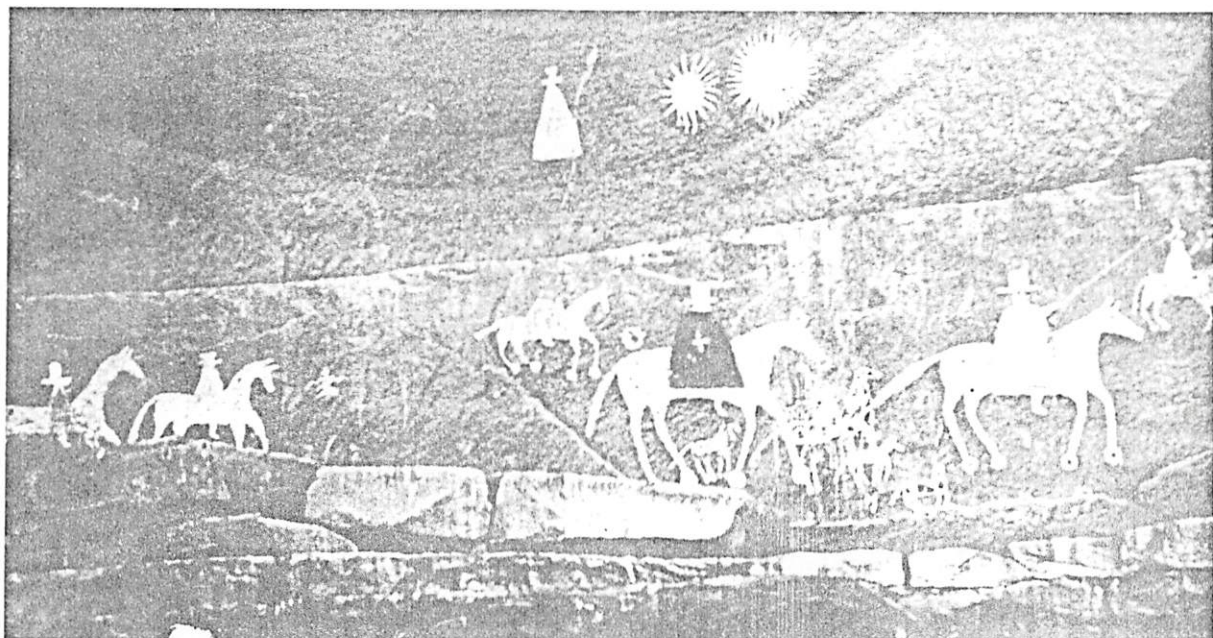


Decipher this ancient stone tablet and you're on the way to treasure.

promising showing of good ore; neither was it unusual for anyone mining on the Indian Reserve to be quiet about what he was doing.

Shortly afterwards, Foreman wrote of a tragedy which befell him: "My son, while fooling with a pistol, shot himself in the head. This has been a sore trial, for it leaves me without my best helper." The loss of his son may have put an end to Foreman's mining; he also was kept busy dodging Federal Marshal Bauchman who sought his arrest on polygamy charges. In fact, Foreman was arrested soon afterwards and was sent to the Territorial Prison for having multiple wives. Were the finds made by Bingley and Foreman part of the same ledge of ore? Daniels Canyon might be a good place to do a little prospecting, especially somewhere up around Foreman's Spring. You can locate it on any good forest map. It isn't on the Indian Reserve now.

Nearly ninety years after Foreman dug his tunnel close to the top of Daniels Canyon, the Killer Mountains claimed a victim almost in sight of his mine. In September 1987, newspapers carried the following headline: Mysterious Death Of Gold Prospector! Murder In The Mountains Above Heber! That gruesome account described the murder of Joseph Sheets, age 28, whose body was found "East of Heber and about three miles from the Daniels Canyon summit." A few days later a follow-up article reported that Sheets had been a prospector and was enroute to his diggings when he was killed. The report added that he had been shot twice



An ancient Indian pictograph depicts the coming of the Black Robes.

in the back of the head. His tragic death was only the latest in a long list of miners and prospectors mysteriously killed in what some have come to call the Killer Mountains. To date no clue has been found to explain his death.

An examination of current road maps indicates that the most direct route from Heber Valley eastward to the Ute Indian Reservation is via Daniels Canyon, the course of the present highway, but that is not the route used by Indians or by Spanish miners. Before the first wagon road was built, the old trail from Heber Valley to the east followed Lake Creek to its summit, and then continued down the canyon of the West Fork of the Duchesne River on the opposite side of the mountains. Settlers at Heber City noticed that Indians chose the easier grade of Lake Creek and the West Fork, even though the pass between them was 9,500' in elevation, rather than climb the steeper and twisting Daniels Canyon to its summit at a much lower 8,000'. Old carvings of turtles, snakes, arrows and Maltese Crosses cut into giant pines and ancient aspens along the way prove that Spanish miners favored the same trail.

The high and nearly barren ridge which separates Lake Creek and the Provo River drainage from that of the Duchesne River runs north to south for thirty miles or more. It gave Spanish explorers easy access to such rich mining districts as Strawberry Valley, Currant Creek, the West Fork and Wolf Creek. Over the years, sheepherders working for Heber Valley rancher Cal Giles have found a number of Spanish artifacts in that area. A Spanish helmet was found almost completely

buried in a giant tree which had grown around it. Apparently it had been placed in a fork of that tree sometime in the distant past, where it was left and forgotten. Over a century or more of time that giant aspen grew almost completely around the helmet. Another herder found a strange looking metal boot or armored footgear along Trout Creek, while a rusted breastplate was found close by, near the head of Co-Op Creek. All of those relics, found across a wide expanse of what was then pristine mountain country, certainly weren't lost by Indians or Mormon pioneers; they were lost by Spanish adventurers.

Just over the top of Lake Creek Ridge, near the head of Wolf Creek, there is an old Spanish mine. It is easy to find once, but I've learned that it's real hard to find a second time. Several people have seen it, but then couldn't find their way back a short time later. It's in sight of the Silver Meadows, but hidden in a thick stand of pines, not far from a small mountain lake. It may be the mine described by Heber City's *Wasatch Wave*. That old report stated: "Two men have found an old mine east of Heber City, near the shore of a mountain lake. The ruins of an ancient arrastra (a primitive Spanish mill) were found near the mine. Ore samples carry sensational values in gold!" That description matches the old mine near the Silver Meadows. Unfortunately, I haven't found any follow-up reports in later issues of the *Wave*.

During the 1950s, I went to the Silver Meadows to spend a few days with Roy Peterson, an old friend who had herded sheep in that area for most of his life. He

remembered seeing that old mine many years earlier, and also recalled two men who made their camp near it. He said they built a small cabin at the edge of the meadow below the mine. Roy added that he thought they were "shady characters," and may have been the two toughs who robbed a store at the old placer camp on Currant Creek. My curiosity aroused, I decided to look for that old mine. I never found it, at least not during that trip, but I did find something else just as interesting.

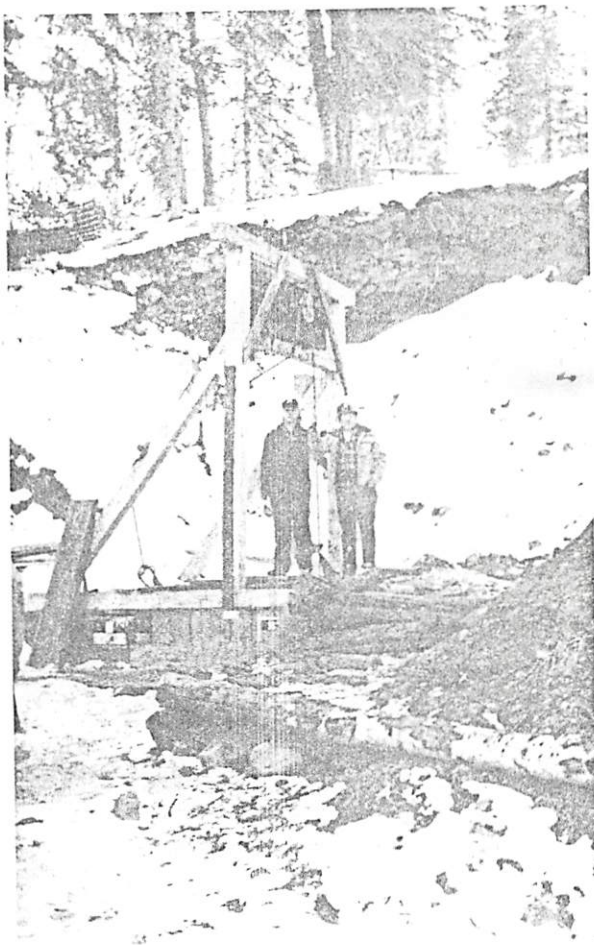
Along a small creek in a rocky canyon below where the mine was supposed to be located, I came upon what appeared to be the site of an old smelter. Among fallen rocks which may have been part of its foundation, I picked up several pieces of metal, which looked as though they had been spilled or splattered on the ground while still in a molten state. Trapped in that slag were several bits of rock, caught when the liquid metal flowed around them. The metal was corroded into a dull gray color, and was very heavy. The pieces could easily be bent. Several weeks later I asked an assayer at a Park City mine where I was then working to examine some of the strange metal. His assay revealed that it was a silver-lead bullion. I found that metal less than a mile from where I later found the old mine. Did the Spanish miners who worked there have a smelter where I found the bullion? Did they leave because they wanted to, or were they driven from the mountains by Indians? Did they take all of their bullion with them, or could some of it still be hidden at the old mine? I don't know, for I haven't been able to find that mine since!

Dave Betts and Chad Hardman of Kamas Valley are partners in an old mine on the Silver Meadows. That mine's location has been well known for a long time now, but recent development work as well as research into its history now indicates that it may be an old Spanish mine, perhaps two hundred years old! Until recently, most everyone referred to it as the Old Pace Mine, and assumed that it had been dug by A.C. Pace and others sometime after 1906; but examination of mining records at the Wasatch County Courthouse, as well as information gleaned from interviewing old-timers living at Heber City and Kamas Valley has proven that the mine was an old one when it was first seen by Pace.

While researching those old records, Dave Betts learned that the mine was discovered and claimed by Pace, a Park City mining man, and several partners during the closing months of 1906. Almost by chance, he also learned that Pace had been killed only four months later, early in 1907, which fact proved that Pace couldn't have dug the shaft, since it was more than 200 feet deep and had been sunk through solid rock. One of Pace's partners, a geologist named Gillespie, was also killed soon afterwards in a separate incident, so he didn't dig it either. It was also thought that Pace built two old log cabins which were close by the mine, but old-timers, including Hardman's mother, said that those cabins were old when Pace first discovered them. Mrs. Dolly

Hardman remembered seeing those old cabins as a young woman, some seventy years ago. She said that even then they were very old, their lower logs so rotted that the cabins had sunk into the ground until the tops of their roofs were only three or four feet above the surface. Judging from her recollections, those cabins were probably more than 100 years old when Pace first saw them.

Hardman learned that about 1915, one of Pace's sons tried to reopen the old mine, and from that time until about 1960, several others, including Mont Walker and Doug Simpson of Kamas, continued the work; but their efforts were directed mostly towards sinking a new inclined shaft aimed at striking the ore body at depth. Pockets of underground gas or bad air slowed their work considerably, and during a period when no work was being done, persons unknown stole their hoisting engine, bringing work to a halt. Betts and Hardman decided to reopen the old vertical shaft, rather than continue work on the incline. Both men have a lifetime of



Jeremy Betts and Chad Hardman at the old Spanish mine on the Silver Meadows. (Courtesy: Chad Hardman)

underground experience working at the Park City mines, and the square-set timber they have put in place in that old shaft reveals their expertise. Thirty feet below the surface they made a startling discovery.

At that level they came to a place where it first appeared that the original miners had angled the shaft around a large boulder, a boulder which was strangely out of place in solid ground so far below the surface. Deciding to remove the boulder rather than timber around it, they blasted it loose from the side of the shaft. To their surprise, they discovered that it had been purposely put in place to conceal a side drift which had been dug horizontally from the shaft. Crawling back into that ancient digging, they discovered a large stope, or room, where ore had been removed sometime in the distant past. On the rock face of that stope they found where the original miners had followed a foot-wide vein of high grade silver ore!

Samples of the ore from that stope were taken to an assayer at Park City's Ontario Mine, where one of the partners then worked. After testing was complete, the assayer asked from which level of the Ontario Mine the samples came. When he was told that they came from the Silver Meadows, some forty miles away, the assayer was amazed, and stated that they were identical to ore samples at the Ontario Mine. Some mining engineers believe that the ore vein at the Silver Meadows is a continuation of the silver vein at the Ontario Mine, which to date has produced more than one hundred million dollars! There is no way to know how large an ore vein will be uncovered when Betts and Hardman get the old shaft retimbered to its original depth at an estimated 220 feet, but based on the high grade ore discovered in the hidden stope, their hopes are high. There is no longer much doubt that their Silver Meadows mine is an old Spanish digging, but only time will reveal the extent of the treasure hidden there. Also, one can't help but wonder if the still lost mine near the head of Wolf Creek isn't on the same ore vein.

The mountain road which leads from Heber Valley past the little hamlet of Woodland enroute to Wolf Creek and the Silver Meadows passes by several old Spanish mines. Near the head of Riley's Canyon, only a few miles north of the Wolf Creek road, there is a shaft typical of those dug by Spanish miners. A circular foot-path only inches wide hugs the side of that awesome pit, descending into unknown depths—unknown because no man dares descend that spiral staircase. Other old mines pock-mark the ridgeline leading west to Moon Springs. On that high ridge, rockhounds dig pieces of precious horn coral, which they make into beautiful jewelry.

Near where the paved road ends east of Woodland, a narrow dirt track leads off towards the foothills and the edge of the cedars. An old logging road once climbed the mountain there, but only a trace of it remains. However, close to that old trace, on the shoulder of the hill and hidden behind a stand of gnarled

cedar trees, Ronald Krause discovered an old mine, a shaft at least forty feet deep. At first glance it doesn't look like a mine, but more like a sinkhole or natural opening; yet when Krause first saw it some years ago the remnants of a crude windlass hoist still stood over the opening. Over the years since then it has rotted away and fallen into the depths. Krause discovered a trace of silver in the wall rock, but he was unable to descend far enough into the caved workings to sample the ore vein at the bottom of the shaft.

Higher on the mountain, along a deer trail, Krause came upon another mine, hidden at the base of a cliff. The entry is only a narrow slit in the cliff, perhaps two feet in width, but the passage widens a few feet into the mountain. Tool marks cut into the entry reveal that Spanish miners removed only the ore vein, taking no more waste rock from the side walls than was necessary, a feature typical of Spanish mines. Steps or places to stand are cut into the stone walls of the shaft at five foot intervals, just about the height one man could lift a sack filled with heavy ore to another man standing above him. When Krause found the entry, there were several old pine poles covering the opening, so old they were covered with green moss. It was obvious that they had been placed there to conceal the opening. He replaced the poles just as he found them. Until now he has not filed a claim on either mine, knowing that would give their location away. Right now he is counting on them as his ace in the hole when he retires; that is, if you don't find them first!

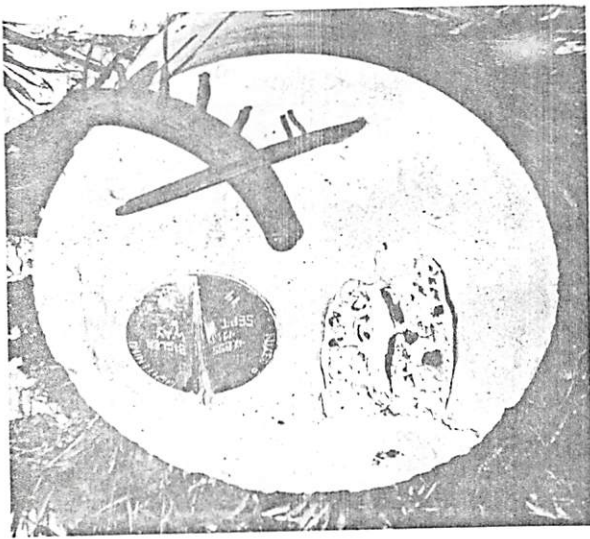
The old Indian and Spanish trail followed the West Fork of the Duchesne River downstream to Wolf Creek, only a mile or so west of its junction with the North Fork. One of the early settlers along the Duchesne was Frank Savage. Near where he used to ranch, several small creeks tumble down the almost vertical canyon walls. A nearly impassible Jeep trail climbs Iron Mine Canyon to the ridgeline high above; and if your vehicle is capable of following it far enough, it connects with the Silver Meadows road near Wolf Creek. Along the way, side trails branch off into rocky canyons or lose themselves atop windswept ridges. Hidden somewhere between boulder-strewn basins and impossibly steep ridges are several old mines. About midway between Cold Springs and Lightning Ridge there is a caved tunnel and a waste dump where in the past someone dug for silver—at least there are pieces of silver on the tailings pile. There must be a ledge or outcrop somewhere nearby where flakes of gold have their origin, because last year a Peruvian shepherder picked up several small nuggets in Trail Hollow, a place some believe is close to the famed Stone Staircase Mine of the Spanish.

During the 1930s, close to Trail Hollow but a little further down on the Duchesne River side of Lightning Ridge, a CCC worker fell into an old shaft. He was able to climb out without help, but since he was an Easterner who had been constantly ridiculed by his western-born companions, he never mentioned the incident until

the town barber at Duchesne, found a Spanish sword in a tree, about three miles up country from where the West and North forks of the Duchesne River meet. That sword is now in the possession of a relative who declines to have it photographed, but there is no doubt of its existence, for half of the people at Duchesne have seen it at one time or another.

The Stone Staircase Mine, the shaft found by LaVar Thompson and the sword discovered by Vern Kluse are all in the area of Lightning Ridge, which was named for Jesse Bigler, a shepherd who was struck and killed by lightning there in September 1917. If you know just where to look atop that ridge, you can find a small marker to his memory, placed there by Forest Ranger Ed Adair. But treasure hunters may be more interested in the red gold of Lightning Ridge. At first it may sound like an unlikely story, but research indicates that it is true.

A few of the Old Ones among the Utes say that in the long ago Spanish miners brought a band of captured Navajo slaves north with them to work their mines at Lightning Ridge, at a place where an unusual red-colored gold rock was found. They say that Spaniards brought Navajos because Utes were too hard to capture and often rebelled against their captors. For awhile the Navajos proved to be docile workers, but in time they too wearied of their forced labor, and one day there was an uprising in which most of their Spanish masters were massacred. Many Navajos were also killed. From centuries of working as silversmiths, the Navajos knew the value of silver and gold better than did the Utes, so when the survivors of the battle returned south to their canyonlands home they took a heavy load of the precious red gold with them.

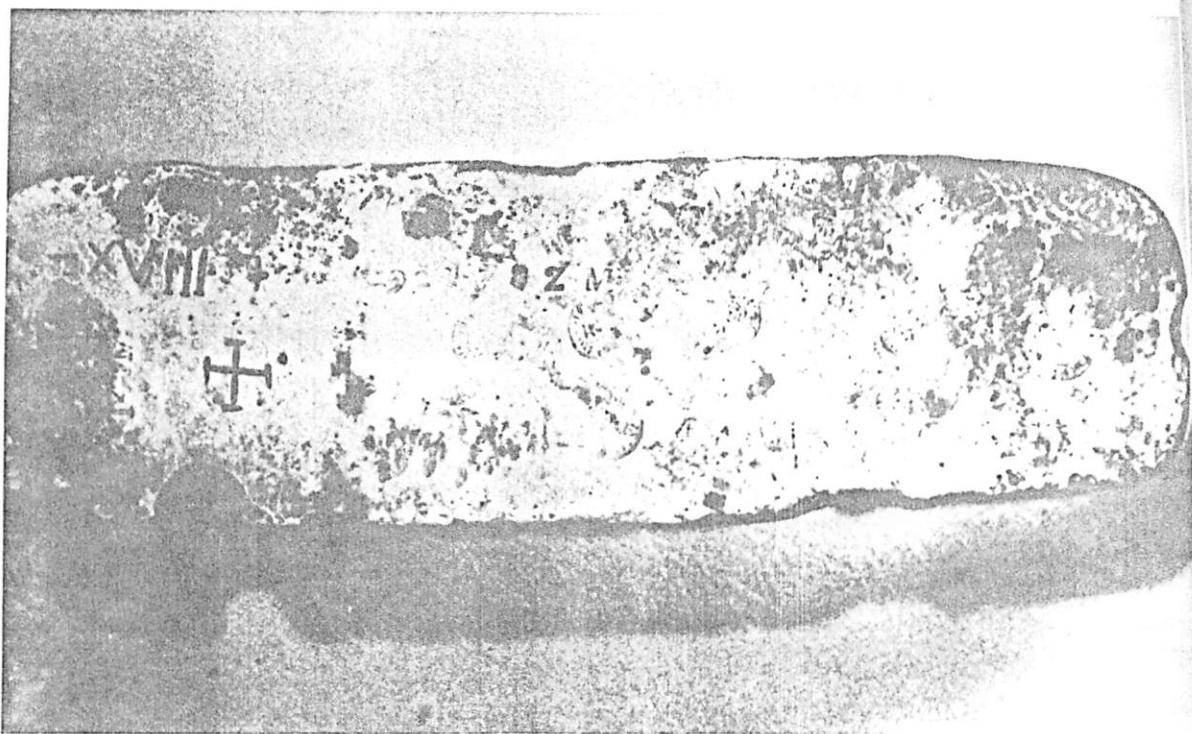


Lightning Ridge was named for Jesse Bigler, killed by lightning, September 1917.

some weeks later when talk at camp turned to tales of lost mines and caches. His description of the shaft, dug at a steep incline with a series of steps leading to the bottom cut into its stone walls, answered almost exactly a description of the famous Stone Staircase Mine. By then the CCC camp had been moved across the mountain to Soapstone Basin, so none of the workers had any chance to return to investigate the shaft. The Easterner could only tell his comrades that the shaft was nearly covered with small trees and brush, that being the reason he stepped into it, and that it was located at the base of a very steep ridge, close to a peculiarly forked pine tree. He said that he counted thirty-five stone steps between the level where he had fallen and the surface. Plenty of prospectors have searched for the Stone Staircase Mine, but no one has stumbled into it since!



An ancient bell found not far from the Stone Staircase Mine.



Are there more gold bars in the old shaft on Lightning Ridge?

The massacre at Lightning Ridge would have remained only a legend had not an elderly Navajo come to Roosevelt City in 1981. Following a map drawn for him by his grandfather (see Map C), he found his way to the ridge; but, as he approached the site of the old mine there, he was suddenly shot at by several Ute Indians whose job it was to guard the red gold. He fled in heavy timber to escape, several days later making his way back to Roosevelt. There he confided in one of the town's businessmen, a man he had been told he could trust. At first the merchant thought that the story of the Navajo massacre and the lost mine of red gold was just Indian folklore, but when he was shown several pieces of the red-colored rock he began to have second thoughts. He agreed to ask his Ute friends about the legend while the Navajo returned to his reservation home.

After due investigation, the businessman became convinced of the truth of the old Indian's story, and that there had in fact been a massacre involving Navajos and Spaniards at Lightning Ridge in the past. He even learned that Navajo tribal leaders had long wanted some sort of commemorative monument erected to the memory of the Navajo slaves who had been killed there. He contacted the old Navajo as he had promised to do, and even sent him a check to pay his fare back to Roosevelt. When several weeks had passed and the Indian still had not arrived, he made a telephone call only to learn that the aged Navajo had been shot and killed by an

unknown ambusher just as he was preparing to return north. The check sent by the merchant was never cashed, nor was the map the Navajo had ever found. Some think the Killer Mountains claimed still another victim far away in Navajo land!

Late one evening I received a telephone call from an acquaintance who told me about a man he knew who was noticeably excited and obviously scared. The man even admitted that he feared for his life. He told my friend of going to an old Spanish mine shaft "north of Hanna near Lightning Ridge" with a partner who was a Ute Indian. He said that the shaft was deep and dangerous; nevertheless, he descended down into it for some three hundred feet, to where there was a side drift or level where a hoard of Spanish gold was cached. Using his mountain climbing expertise and with the use of ropes they were able to lift one bar from the shaft. Here the story differs from almost any other gold bar story I have heard. Most gold bars I have seen or know of are quite small, and they are almost always rectangular in shape, usually an inch or two square and six to eight inches in length. But the bar the caller described was tapered in shape, being about an inch wide across the top but nearly three inches in width at the base, and eighteen inches in length. He said the bar weighed sixty-two pounds, which indicates that it was probably a bullion metal rather than pure gold. It may also have contained some copper or iron, since it was an unusual

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reddish-gold color. There were several marks on the bar which he couldn't decipher, but the date stamped on it was perfectly clear, 1662!

I filed the caller's story away in a vacant corner of my mind and probably would have forgotten all about it if I hadn't received another call several days later from a man who identified the man who had recovered the bar. He also stated that the finder, a man who he knew well, was genuinely afraid for his life. He said that when he and his Indian partner attempted to return to the shaft, they were shot at by an unseen rifleman, whose aim was so accurate that it was obvious that he could have hit them had he chose to do so. (If his story sounds contrived, remember, the old Navajo Indian was also shot at on Lightning Ridge.) He and his partner fled the shaft and ran down from the ridge. He also said that even before they went to the shaft the first time, they knew that a prospector had been shot and killed there not long before. (Score one more for the Killer Mountains?) He told my informant that his Indian partner had learned of a dissident half-breed Indian group that has boasted they will kill both him and his white partner if either of them are ever seen again in the mountains near Lightning Ridge.

It isn't often that one gets a concrete lead on those whose job it is to guard the old Spanish mines, but a few days after receiving the described telephone calls, I talked to a white man who had been raised on the Ute Reservation. Not long before, he had been hiking in the same area where the old shaft is located, and he was stopped by a Ute Indian who he recognized as a friend with whom he had attended school. He gave me the man's name in confidence. They were later in the army together, where both won medals as sharpshooters. So it came as a surprise when his old schoolmate stopped him from going further into the mountains. When he realized that his friend was serious, he suggested they hike up the mountain together. His boyhood friend told him he would like to do so, but that the old Indian would stop them both. He hadn't seen anyone else until then, but looking up the canyon he saw another Indian standing on a rocky ledge, watching the canyon below. When he turned to talk to his friend and then looked back up canyon again, the old Indian was gone. His army buddy would only say that white men were not allowed in that area, which is the same area the sixty-two pound gold bar came from. But if you still aren't convinced and decide to take a look for yourself, remember, that Indian guard was an army sharpshooter!

Another thing about Lightning Ridge. It wasn't until later that I recalled a story Ed Twitchell told me. Ed had lived on the Ute Reservation and did a little prospecting there. He said that many years ago he saw a gold

bar which had been found in a shaft somewhere north of Hanna. It had been recovered by two young Indians who had cut the bar in half. Ed only saw one half of the bar, but he remembered that it was about three inches wide and about nine or ten inches long, about half its original length. The bar wasn't exactly gold colored, but more of a reddish-gray. He recalled that an assay revealed that it was mostly gold and silver with a small percentage of copper. That sounds a lot like half of the sixty-two pound bar found at Lightning Ridge.

If you still doubt that Spanish miners dug gold at Lightning Ridge, consider the following. Only very recently a government employee who wishes to remain anonymous for reasons which will be shown was on the ridge checking a tract of timber which was to be posted for sale. He was riding his horse along the ridge top when a sudden thunderstorm came up, and not wanting to be atop the ridge at almost the same place where Jesse Bigler had been struck with lightning, he turned his mount and headed down country through the thick pine forest. As he came down from the ridge, he noticed an object shinging among fallen leaves and pine needles in the draw he was following. Being trained to be alert for any potential fire hazard, he stopped to see what it was. To his surprise, he picked up a bar of gold!

The bar was unusual in that it was quite small, only about an inch square and three inches in length. One end was jagged and rough, as if it had been broken from a longer bar. He never talked much about finding the bar, still he did nothing to hide the fact that he had found it, so that within a short time several people knew about it. Then one morning two rough-looking men, both of whom can only be described as "crazies," stormed into his office. Both were wearing sidearms and they appeared to be dangerous. The older of the two was tall, thin and nearly bald, while his companion was younger and husky. Their identity is known, so you might recognize their description.

The two "crazies" demanded to know where he had found the bar of gold. When he refused to talk to them, one made a threatening move as if to reach for his handgun. Being a rugged outdoorsman, he threw both of them from his office before they knew what was happening, but that didn't end his trouble with the gold bar. More people began questioning him and he began receiving threatening telephone calls. Tired of being harassed, and fearful for his family's welfare, he sold the bar to a gold buyer. Now he refuses to discuss his find with anyone, and even denies ever having the bar, but those who saw it know better. And those who know about the red gold of Lightning Ridge say that is where that bar of gold came from.

few chose to follow him, and those who did often regretted having done so—that is, the ones who lived to regret it. Rhoads had warned settlers not to follow him, and as the ranking Mormon and military leader in the valley, as well as the owner of the Rhoads Land Grant, his warning was accepted as gospel. Ephraim Lambert, one of those pioneer settlers, later told his son and grandson about a man who followed Rhoads. That incident was tape recorded by the grandson, Glen Lambert. Excerpts from the author's copy of that tape tell the following story:

Now Rhoads was a good rifleman, having spent most of his life in the mountains, and he let it be known that no one was to follow him. He wasn't above shooting anyone if he found them trying to follow him. Of course a few tried, but soon lost his trail and came back. But one fellow, a Spaniard, came to town [Kamas] and was asking about Tom Rhoads, where he was at and if anyone knew how to find him. At that time Tom was away on one of his trips to his gold mine, so this fellow lit out on his trail, going east up Beaver Creek. No one ever knew how far he went or anything about it, but a few days later this fellow's horse came back alone. No one ever knew what became of the Spaniard, nor did anyone ask.

Did the Killer Mountains claim another victim?

At that time most everyone knew that Rhoads went up Beaver Creek east of Kamas, but somewhere along the way he turned off into rough country where his tracks would be lost on stony ground or while crossing a rock slide. Some said he turned off Beaver Creek to go up Shingle Creek, while others thought he went up the North Fork of the Provo. Aaron Daniels, an early settler of Heber Valley, recorded the following in his journal:

About 1860, I moved from Heber to Wanship [a tiny settlement located just north of Kamas Valley]. It was in the mountains near there that I first encountered Thomas Rhoads. He was packing out gold from a mine he had somewhere just over the summit of the mountains above Kamas Valley.

At that time there was a well-worn Indian trail between Kamas Valley and the Uinta Basin. From the head of the Provo River, a rider could pass by Mirror Lake and follow the Duchesne River downstream into the Uinta Basin, or he could cross the high country between Mirror Lake and Granddaddy Lake to the headwaters of Rock Creek, and follow that stream into the basin. W.P. Mechem, an early rancher at Kamas Valley, told of finding a chunk of quartz rock heavy with gold where he crossed that high divide at the headwaters of the Provo River. That rock was obviously out of place, as if it had been dropped or lost where Mechem found it, perhaps by a Spanish pack train. When he had the quartz specimen tested by an assayer, it was found to carry a fantastic 800 ounces of gold to the ton! That was the same trail followed by Thomas Rhoads.



A five-ton stone door still seals this old mine on the North Fork.

It is well known that Thomas Rhoads explored as far east as the Uinta Basin, for in September 1860 he was sent there on a mission by Brigham Young to locate future settlement sites. Accompanying him were Jesse Fox and J.W. Cummings. That they were discouraged by the prospect of farming in the Uinta Basin is evidenced by their report, which stated in part: "Our opinion is that the inducement to locate a settlement for farming or grazing in the Uinta Basin is not at all inviting." If his opinion had been sought on the basin's mining potential, his reply might have been quite different.

A pioneer rancher named Mitchell had a cabin near where Shingle Creek flows into Beaver Creek, and sometimes Rhoads would stop there to visit. Once he left an extra pack horse with Mitchell, and upon his return from the mountains several days later gave him a small piece of gold ore in payment for the care and feeding of his horse. Those who saw the gold ore Rhoads brought from the mountains all agreed that his "gold rock" wasn't from a placer, since the gold ran through a sort of sugar quartz, with wires of yellow gold all through it. Cal McDonald, who once helped him load sacks of ore onto a pack animal, said that the ore was yellow as beeswax. "When melted down it looked like honey, but would splash like molten lead if he spilled some of it. It was so heavy that both of us would grunt when lifting a small sack filled with it.



The trail to the Blackhawk Mesa cache begins at old Roosevelt.

ber of that year, only a few months after Rhoads' death. Those who were close to Murdock said that he brought nearly pure gold from that mine. Its location is still on file at the Wasatch County courthouse at Heber City, but like so many claim notices of that period, the description recorded does little to reveal its exact location, stating only that, "The mine is situated on the east bank of the river, southwest of the sawmill in Wasatch County." Today that location is in Uintah County. There were probably hundreds of sawmills in Wasatch County, but any which might have been on the east bank of the Uinta River have long since disappeared. Murdock's mine is now "lost."

There are few places with more old Spanish mines, both lost and found, than along Pole Creek, a tributary of the Uinta River. Aaron Daniels, the old prospector-settler of the Uinta Basin, described a Spanish mine in Pole Creek Canyon in his journal. That entry reads in part as follows:

I was examining an iron lead along Pole Creek when Caleb Rhoads came by. He showed me an old smelter on the creek bank which had been built by the Spaniards. He then took me to several old mine shafts, one of them about a mile

from the Pole Creek Sink. He said that he had dug gold from that shaft for his own use. It is hard to see unless you know just where to look. I went down into it for only a short distance because the sides were caving in. I think it could be one of his best mines. [See Map 0.]

Fred Cudney, a noted geologist who is very familiar with the Uinta Mountains, recently told me that he considers the Pole Creek area to be a most promising place to prospect for valuable minerals.

A few years after Caleb Rhoads' death, a pick and shovel were found hidden in a large cedar tree between the Whiterocks River and Pole Creek. Pick Murdock identified them as belonging to Rhoads, because of the peculiar way he had hand-carved their handles. One of the old Indians from Whiterocks used to tell how after Rhoads' death, different white men tried to work a mine located in the bottom of the Pole Creek Sink. (It is not the mine referred to by Daniels, which is located further up canyon from the sink.) That tunnel near the sink bottom broke into the Pole Creek Caverns only a short distance into the mountain. The caverns are a series of limestone caves which honeycomb the mountains for several miles. That old Indian liked to tell how the walls

ish cache which Rhoads called the Church Mine was located not far from Whiterocks.

A number of Caleb Rhoads' close friends expressed their opinion that the Church Mine was in the Whiterocks area. Both Pick Murdock and Art Murdock noted that Rhoads was gone from Whiterocks only two or three days before returning with his pack animals loaded with gold. Pick Murdock went with Rhoads to some of his mines, but probably not to the Church Mine, which Rhoads promised Chief Wakara he would never reveal to anyone. We know that Rhoads confided in Pick Murdock more than anyone else, and Murdock once said that the trail to the Church Mine went up the Whiterocks River Canyon. Also, others couldn't help but note that was the area where Murdock prospected most often after Rhoads' death.

Happy Jack, a Ute Indian, also accompanied Rhoads on some of his prospecting trips. On one occasion Happy Jack said that he remained at camp in the canyon below Whiterocks Lake while Rhoads went to the mine. He stated that Rhoads went up a side gulch which led off the main canyon, and was gone long enough that he could have crossed into the next drainage, which is the Mosby Mountain-Crow Creek area. As noted earlier, there are several old mines on Mosby Mountain, and there are ruins of two old smelters in the valley below those mines. There is also a water hole, still shown on maps, which the Utes call Shin-Ob Spring!

Having narrowed the search area considerably, only one thing more is needed: an eyewitness account, and we have that. In 1885, Aaron Daniels married his third wife, a Ute Indian woman he called Rose. She was a child survivor of the Bear River Massacre, and had been raised by the Daniels family. The couple had four sons, but Rose also raised most of Daniels' nineteen other children. As a pioneer settler at Ashley (Vernal) and later a squawman, Daniels was related to and became close friends with many Ute Indians. As already noted, he was keenly interested in prospecting and was closely associated with men like Pick Murdock and Caleb Rhoads. As a confidant of theirs, he learned the location of many Spanish mines, but revealed their location to no one, not even his family. However, in a last will and testament type of journal entry dictated in July 1895, Daniels wrote the following:

With Kale Rhoads, another prospector, I learned the secret location of a sacred Indian mine. I have often been asked why I haven't revealed this knowledge or profited from it. I took an oath, so I am not at liberty to profit from it. This I owe in loyalty to the Mormon Church, who as I have previously heard Chief Wakara state, the gold belongs to. I also discovered other old mines once worked by the Spaniards, which will yet prove to be as valuable as the sacred mine to the economy of this territory. Now being old in years and infirm, yet sound of mind and good memory, I leave a record of my life, including the location and description

of some of the mines I have found or have been shown. I do this so that my family might profit from my experience. I also attach my maps and charts showing the location of those mines, and give to my wife, Rose Daniels, instructions to develop them for the benefit of my family after my death. [See Map P.]

Among the documents left by Daniels was a description of a trip he made to the Ute's sacred Carre-Shin-Ob Mine, which many believe is the famed Rhoads Church Mine. Daniels' description of the mine is too lengthy to quote in its entirety, but all of the pertinent landmarks and the trail he followed are related exactly as he described them. Those who have prospected in the places he tells of will recognize them and will appreciate the accuracy of his narrative.

I first saw Carre-Shin-Ob, the sacred Indian mine, in the year 1889, when I was told by my wife's people that I might see it up close, but only if I didn't know where it was located. With Happy Jack, David Copperfield, Cessapoonch and some others, I was taken blindfolded to an old Indian trail located near the Chalk Cliffs, just below the



The flower stem marks the trail, the petals tell the direction, on the trail to Carre-Shin-Ob. (Courtesy: Dale Bascom)

add 99

a cave along that creek. He also told of another mine close by, at what he called the "sawtooth range." Another time he said it was on a rocky ridge which outcropped along a mountain which was "jagged as a dinosaur's back." It is supposed to be near the natural arch and cave in Dry Fork Canyon. Frank Murdock, who had a butcher shop at Whiterocks, also described a mine he knew of in a place which sounds almost the same. Murdock said that his mine was located on the "rooster comb." There is a place along Dry Fork which even today one might describe as a dinosaur's back or a rooster comb. Murdock said that inside that mine there was a vein of pure silver, but the Indians were afraid to go into it, calling it the Snake Hole. Murdock said that it was a dark and dangerous place, because Spanish miners had left a lot of black gunpowder inside the mine, and that powder was very old and unstable. If you can find Frank Murdock's "rooster comb," you might be at Caleb Rhoads' mine on the "dinosaur's back in the sawtooth range."

Aaron Daniels also knew Dry Fork Canyon well. He once told how he came upon an ancient tunnel portal, badly caved and its portal covered with rocks, but with a hole in those rocks big enough for him to crawl through. He said there were bones of dead men inside that tunnel, and some Spanish marks on its walls, the same kinds of signs he saw on trees outside the tunnel. He returned several years later, intending to reopen the caved portal, but he couldn't find the mine. Loose rock had slid down the mountain front, completely covering it. But close to where the mine was located, he found a name and date cut into a sandstone ledge: Alvarez de Leon, 1669!

Another who may have stumbled onto the old mine along Dry Fork was a prospector from Oklahoma, a man well known to those who roam the back country. Every year for ten years or more he made the long trip from Oklahoma to prospect the Dry Fork area, where he stayed until the first snow fell. Sometimes a Ute Indian, said to be a member of the tribal council, went with him. Those who met him in the mountains said he had an old hand-sketch map of the canyon, given to him by his Ute friend. They say that sketch looked a lot like Map R. Over the years he made many fascinating discoveries of ancient signs and symbols, and of strange stone trail markers and monuments. He visited with the author on several occasions to compare notes regarding those old Spanish signs and markers. On his last trip to Dry Fork only a few years ago, he climbed atop a large rock so that he might get a better view of the heavily-forested mountainside he was on. To his surprise, he saw what looked like an old ladder sticking out from under a giant pine tree which had fallen just uphill from that rock. Investigating further, he found that there was an almost vertical shaft hidden under that log.

After careful investigation, he realized that long ago that huge tree had been purposely felled to cover the

shaft. When the pine had fallen, it had broken into several lengths, and he was able to move the section covering the shaft. The hand-built ladder was so old that it fell apart at his touch, but he was able to see that the shaft led down into a square-cut room, with a drift or tunnel extending from its southwest side. That tunnel went directly under Lake Mountain. Being old and alone, he couldn't get down into that room to explore the tunnel. When he returned to Oklahoma, he sent me the information which has been related.

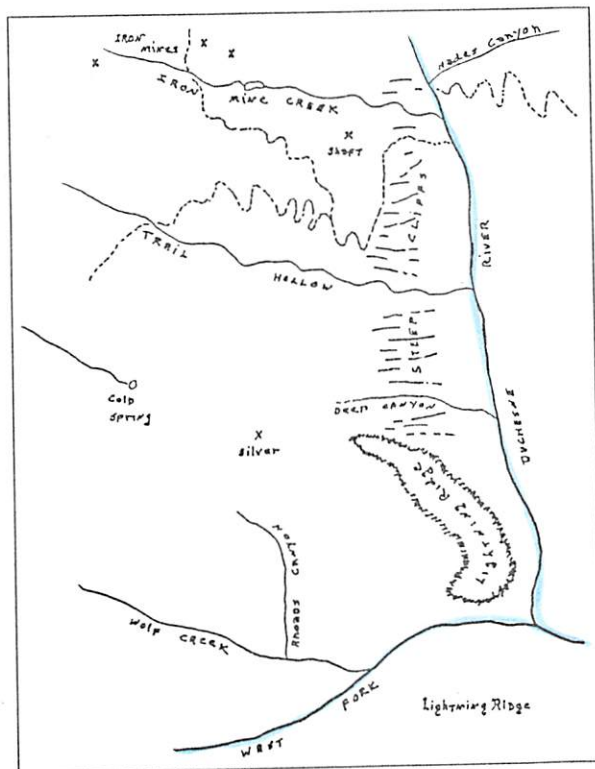
I relayed the prospector's story to a friend who lives near Dry Fork, and he checked it out. He agreed that the shaft and the room cut into the mountain below it are man made, and he even crawled back into that old tunnel for some two hundred feet to where it was closed by a cave-in. He found a place along the way where ore had been stoped out sometime long ago, and he pocketed a piece of rock in which native silver can be seen with a prospector's glass. But he said that both the shaft and tunnel are very old and dangerous, and that it would cost a small fortune to reopen them. However, if you check out a map of Lake Mountain, you might note that that tunnel was driven straight towards Crow Creek and Smelter Spring on the opposite side of the ridge, a place many believe is close to the sacred Carre-Shin-Ob Mine.

It is well known that there are old Spanish mines along the foot of Lake Mountain, close to both Smelter Spring and Shin-Ob Spring. Aaron Daniels left a waybill to one of them with his wife before he died (see Map S).

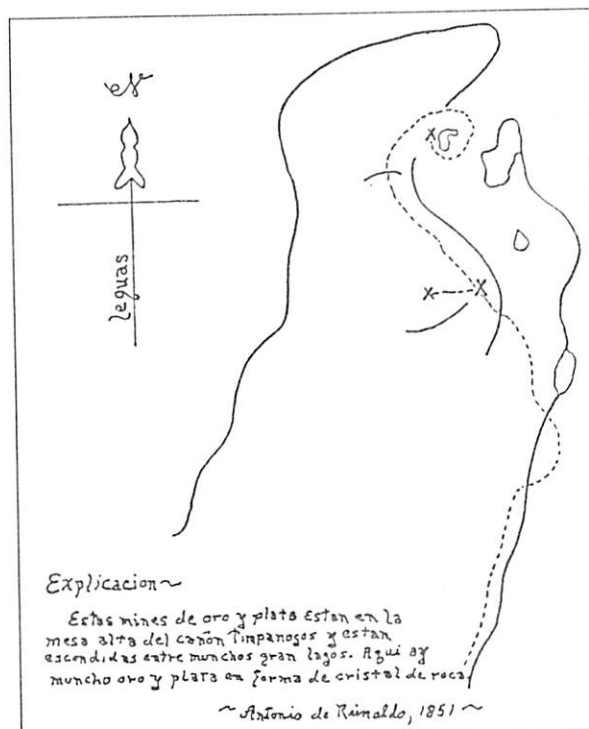
On Mosby Mountain there is a place where Spanish miners marked large pine trees with strange signs. There are many of them, but ignore all except the Catholic Crosses. They lead in a straight line to the edge of the ridge, where you can look across the valley to a canyon at the base of Lake Mountain. That canyon is about two or three miles northeast of the Spanish signs. A draw or gulch runs back into the mountain, where there are some trees which have the same markings on them as I saw at Carre-Shin-Ob.

On the mountain front above, there is a giant pine with an arrow carved in its bark, which points right at the mine. The mine lays in a very hard to find place, and you can walk right by it if you don't watch closely. It is behind some low bushes, and you will have to move some rocks which cover the portal. You can see where the tailings which came out of the mine were thrown across the mountain. I have seen gold from that mine and still have some pieces of it. It is very rich ore. Senator Tom Kearns wanted me to show him the location, but Pick Murdock told me how Kearns cheated him out of a mine, so I never followed the lead. If I hadn't grown old so soon, I could have made it one of the best mines in the western country.

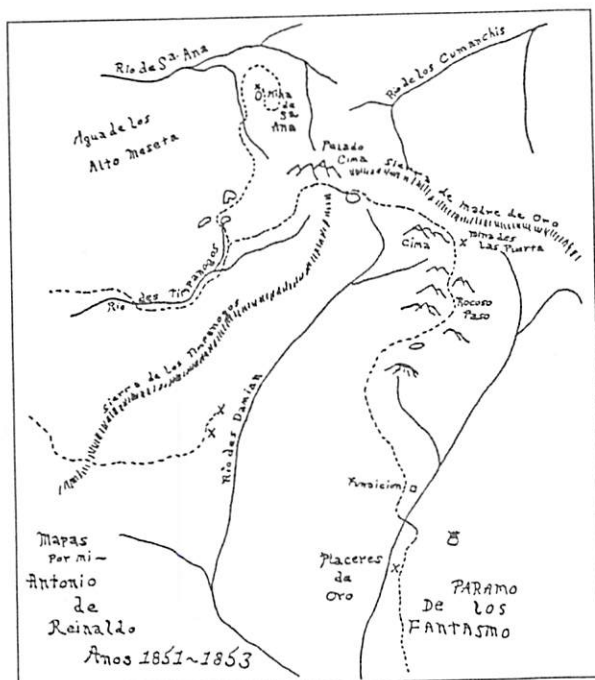
They say that ghosts of murdered miners still guard the hoard of silver cached under the old burned cabin along Dry Fork. Some say that when the moon is dark



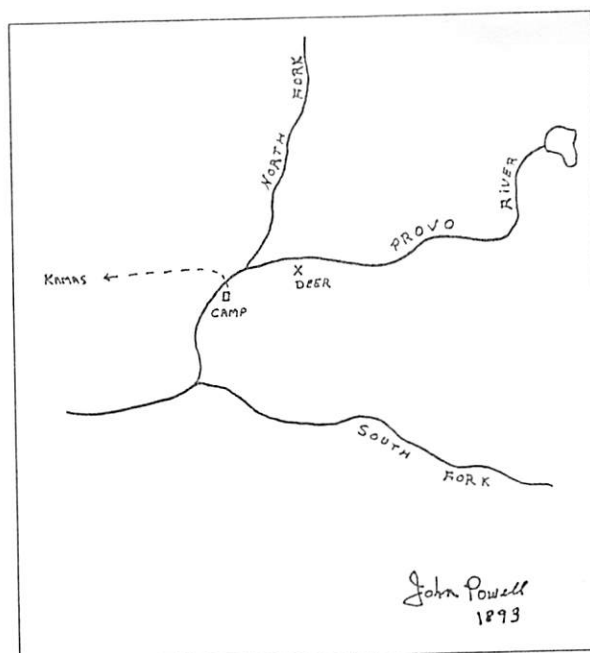
C Lightning Ridge and the Duchesne River drainage, area of the lost Stone Staircase Mine.



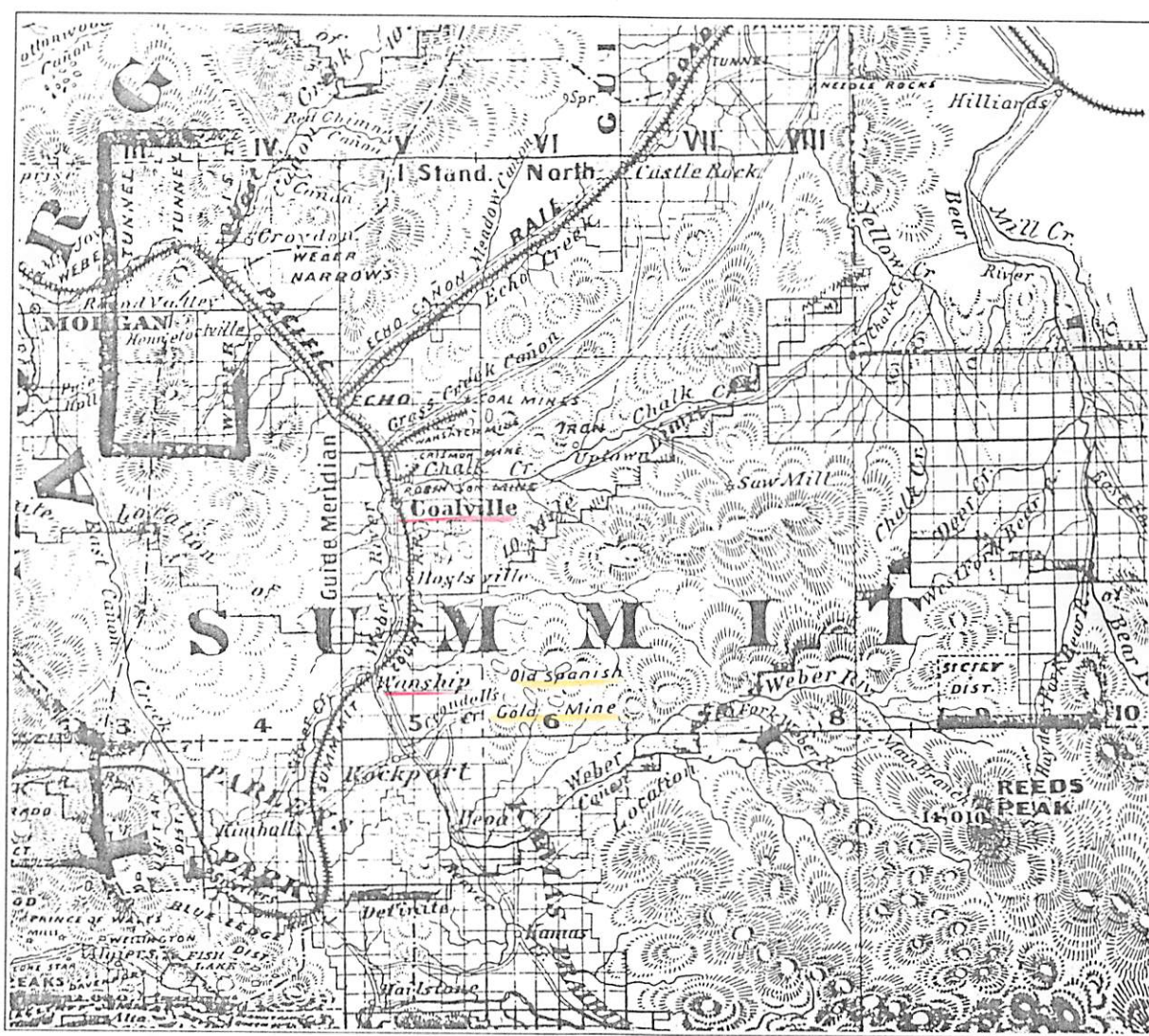
The 1851 Antonio de Reinaldo Map, showing mines of gold and silver at the headwaters of the Provo River. E



F The Antonio de Reinaldo Map of 1851-1853. Shows mines of the upper Weber-Provo river plateau.



The Powell "Deer Hunt" Map. Caleb Rhoads dug gold "not far" from where he hung his deer. (Compare this with the Garcia Map.) G



Froiseth's New Section & Mineral Map of Utah, 1878. An Old Spanish Mine overlooks the Weber River.

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